

Commissioner's Column

Plot Thickens in Milk Mergers

by Jonathan L. Healy

The beat goes on in the dairy consolidation game. On the processing front, Suiza Foods has announced plans to merge with Dean Foods, a huge food conglomerate out of the Midwest. Also this week, many of the New England attorneys general announced an anti-trust settlement with Suiza Foods and Stop and Shop.

For the past few years, I have been writing our Attorney General, suggesting that the consolidation of processing power in the hands of Suiza Foods might not be in the best interest of our consumers and farming community. Thus, it was nice to read that Mass. Attorney General Thomas F. Reilly recently said, "It's a step in the right direction, but it's only a step. This should encourage processors to go after business and encourage competition that this market definitely needs."

The settlement forces Suiza to make 30 million gallons of milk processing capacity available to area competitors, as well as force Stop and Shop to abandon its agreement to sell only Suiza produced milk products in its large chain. It is unclear how the settlement might affect the proposed mega-merger of Suiza and Dean Foods.

A less-noticed piece of the Suiza market power consolidation is the possible effect upon dairy farmers. Apparently Suiza has now entered into an agreement with Dairy Marketing Services (DMS), an agreement which could pose a significant threat to independent dairy farmers. I am concerned that local dairy farmers might now only have one option for their milk. They could possibly be shut out of the market if they did not play ball with DMS. The Massachusetts Cooperative of Milk Producers Federation (MassFed), possibly seeing the hand-writing on the wall, has already entered a deal with DMS, ensuring that this independent organization of dairy farmers has a home for their members' milk.

Stay tuned as changes in the milk industry are taking place quicker than personnel and line-up changes in Dan Duquette's Red Sox. ▲

Ag. Fairs, Agritourism Farms to Receive Foot-and-Mouth Disease Information

The Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture has mailed foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) prevention guidelines and posters to agricultural fairs and agritourism farms across the state – two venues where people and animals may come in contact.

"Foot-and-mouth disease is not a danger to humans," stresses Jonathan L. Healy, state Commissioner of Food and Agriculture. "But people could possibly expose animals to this serious disease. That's why we're asking folks who have traveled abroad recently to not have contact with livestock at fairs and farms they visit."

Some 60 fairs and more than 200 farms were sent the materials including copies of a poster that asks visitors to refrain from entering livestock areas if they have traveled to an

FMD affected country in the past seven days. Fairs and farms are asked to put the posters in a visible place near livestock areas.

Other materials in the mailing include a brochure to help livestock handlers identify FMD should it appear here, and general health guidelines for operators of petting farms, exhibits and fairs where people and animals have contact.

Fair operators and farmers who did not receive the mailing, may call 617-626-1742 to request the packet. FMD information for consumers and travelers is available by calling the US Department of Agriculture toll-free at 1-866-SAFEGUARD. Or visit www.massdfa.org.▲

Annual Fairs Directory Published

Massachusetts Agricultural Fairs 2001, an annual guide to a perennial favorite family pastime, has been published by the state Department of Food and Agriculture. The 23 page booklet lists more than 60 major, community, youth, livestock and Grange fairs held across the Bay State every summer and fall.



For a free copy of *Massachusetts Agricultural Fairs 2001*, call toll-free 1-877-627-7476 or visit www.massdfa.org.

The directory provides the dates, location, and admission charge for each fair as well as this year's attractions and entertainment. The booklet also features a map and a list of fairs by date.▲

Massachusetts Tomato Contest 2001

The 17th Annual Massachusetts Tomato Contest will be held on Friday, August 24th at Elm Bank Reservation in Dover. Sponsored by the New England Vegetable and Berry Growers Assoc. and the Dept. of Food and Agriculture, the contest will be held in conjunction with Massachusetts Marketplace, a trade show featuring local agricultural and specialty products. Tomatoes will be judged on flavor, firmness/slicing quality, exterior color and shape. Judging begins at 1:00 pm. Categories include slicing, heirloom, cherry and heaviest.

Tomatoes can be dropped off from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm at Elm Bank Reservation the morning of August 24th or dropped off the day before at one of several locations across the state. For complete details on participating, including entry criteria and drop off locations, contact David Webber at 617-626-1754, David.Webber@state.ma.us or Kelly Erwin at 413-545-2353, kerwin@umext.umass.edu.▲

Farm-City Connections

Public Market Events Galore!

Friends of the Boston Public Market will exhibit this summer to promote their goal of a public market and to encourage producer participation at venues from City Hall to the waterfront!

4th Annual Celebrate Seaport!

August 11 and 12, 11:00 am to 6:00 pm

This year's Boston waterfront festival coordinated by the Seaport Hotel will take place at Fan Pier near the new Court House. An open-air farmers' market will be featured prominently and growers and specialty food producers are invited to participate.

Festival organizers are looking for fresh produce, herbs, flowers and quality local specialty food items and that means Massachusetts produced!!

Other activities at the event will be sailing, kayaking, hydro-biking lessons and harbor cruises. Sand artists will transform 1000 tons of sand into castles and sculptures and there will be kids' sand castle contests, volleyball and live entertainment.

Overhead tenting, skirted table and chairs, electricity and nearby parking available. A fee of \$80 for a space approx. 10 by 10 feet covers both Saturday and Sunday. To reserve your space, phone 617-626-1735, or email janet.christensen@state.ma.us.

City Hall Plaza Farmers' Market Celebrates the Public Market Concept

On August 1st, specialty food producers are urged to exhibit and sell at this popular farmers' market in an effort to show off the wide range of local foods that would be available at an indoor year round market. Hours are 11:00 am to 6:00 pm.

On August 20th, specialty food producers are again urged to turn out to celebrate Farmers' Market Week and also promote the establishment of a public market for Boston.

Phone us to participate August 1st or 20th: 617-626-1735.▲

Northeast SARE Announces a New Sustainable Farmer-Educator Initiative

Northeast SARE announces a new program to promote sustainable agriculture in which three farmers will be selected to serve as Sustainable Farmer Educators. These farmers will be proven experts in their fields who have experience sharing their knowledge with other farmers, extension educators and other agricultural professionals. They will have spoken at meetings, conferences, workshops, seminars, and field days, answered questions by telephone, e-mail and fax, and otherwise generously responded to requests for help and information. In the upcoming year, Northeast SARE will reimburse these Sustainable Farmer-Educators for their time and the expenses they incur as they continue to share their knowledge.

For 2002, three Sustainable Farmer Educators will be chosen, one from each of the following subject areas: grazing management for dairy cows, horticultural crops, and

agronomic crops. Each of the Sustainable Farmer Educators will be awarded a grant for up to \$8,000 to reimburse travel, phone, fax, and e-mail expenses and to compensate for their time. The activities of each farmer will be reviewed annually, and there is the possibility of extending the award for a total of three years.

Applicants should farm within the region, which is made up of Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C. This is a competitive program, and applications should be in the Northeast SARE office by September 28, 2001. Selections will be made by November 1.

To learn more about this initiative and Northeast SARE, go to www.uvm.edu/~nesare/ or call 802/656-0471.▲

New Petting Farm/Zoo Recommendations

Nationally, several recent outbreaks of enteric illness associated with farm animals have highlighted the importance of safety whenever contact between animals and the public is permitted. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) has recently released "Recommendations for Petting Zoos, Petting Farms, Animal Fairs, and Other Events where Contact between Animals and the Public is Permitted." The purpose of these recommendations is to decrease human exposures to rabies and to other illnesses transmitted from animals to people.



Animals should be closely monitored for signs of illness, and human contact with animals should always be supervised.

To view a complete copy of these new recommendations, go to the MDPH web site at www.state.ma.us/dph/▲

Diseases which can be transmitted from animals to people are called zoonotic diseases. Zoonotic diseases include enteric, or diarrheal illnesses caused by organisms such as E. coli 0157:H7, salmonella and cryptosporidium. Rabies, cat-scratch disease and psittacosis are also examples of zoonotic diseases. Certain groups of people may be more susceptible to these illnesses. These groups include infants, children, pregnant women and those with a weakened immune system.

One of the most important measures to prevent the transmission of zoonotic diseases to people is providing adequate hand washing facilities anywhere contact between animals and the public is permitted. Additionally, eating and drinking in animal areas should not be allowed, and visitors to animal events or farms should NEVER be allowed to sample animal feed or drink raw milk.

Garden Center Critique and Merchandising Workshop

Tuesday, August 7, 2001, 10:00 am - 3:30 pm
Briggs Nursery, Inc., 295 Kelley Blvd. North Attleboro

Dave Seavey, University of New Hampshire Extension, will use his Garden Center Critique and Merchandising Guide to lead retailers in a hands-on workshop analyzing marketing practices, scrutinizing their operation through the eyes of their customers, improving efficiencies and developing innovative marketing strategies. Attendees will use the garden center at Briggs Nursery as an example for their critique. The workshop fee is \$40.

To preregister, contact the University of Massachusetts Extension Floriculture Program, Paul Lopes, 508-295-2212 ext. 24 or Tina Smith, 413-545-5306.▲

Mass. Hosts Dairy Compact Commission

The Northeast Dairy Compact Commission held its monthly meeting for the first time in Massachusetts on Wednesday, June 6 at the Wenham Museum in Wenham.

This spring and summer the Commission is traveling to the six New England states for monthly meetings, with each meeting focusing specifically on issues relating to the host state.

Highlights of the June meeting included a review of a recent University of Connecticut study on the Compact Price Regulation and its effect on the retail beverage milk market by economists from the Vermont Department of Agriculture and the International Dairy Foods Association, a presentation by Conservation Law Foundation economist Priscilla Brooks about how the Compact impacts the environment, and a presentation by Commissioner Jay Healy who spoke about how the Compact dovetails with state agricultural programs.

The Commission recognized Congressman John Olver, Congressman James McGovern, state senators Marc Pacheco and Stephen Brewer and state representatives Daniel Bosley and Stephen Kulik for contributions to the success of the Northeast Dairy Compact.▲

Essex County's 1st Ag. Directional Sign Unveiled

Commissioner Jay Healy and Mass. Highway Department Commissioner Matthew Amorello unveiled Essex County's first Agricultural Directional Sign at Cider Hill Farm in Amesbury last month.

The sign, which has been erected on Rte. 110 west near Rte 495, will direct motorists to Cider Hill Farm's scenic farm, farmstand and pick-your-own operation on Fern Avenue. The Agricultural Directional Signage Program is a collaborative effort of MDFA and MassHighway designed to promote local farms to the traveling public.

The signs are produced and erected by the MassHighway Department and paid for by the farmer. Farms must meet criteria in order to be eligible. The signs can only be erected on non-limited-access state roadways -- not freeways or expressways -- not more than five miles from the farm.

For more information on the program, contact Anneli Johnson, 617-626-1755, Anneli.Johnson@state.ma.us.▲

Wenham Museum Exhibit features Dairy Farming

Cows in the Parlor: New England Dairy Farmers and Their Land, the featured exhibit at the Wenham Museum now through September 9th, is the story of New England dairy farmers -- how they produce and market their milk -- and the future of their livelihoods and their land.



The Thompson Gallery has been turned into a farmyard, complete with barn, milking parlor, and silo, where visitors can explore the workings of a dairy farm and learn about cows. Visitors can also try their hand at milking a life-size bovine. Cows in the Parlor also explains the economics of the fluid milk market.

The exhibit is sponsored by the Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture, funds in memory of James R. Reynolds and other private sources.

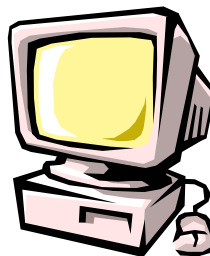
The museum is located at 132 Main Street (Rte. 1A), Wenham, Mass. Hours are Tuesday through Sunday, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Closed Mondays. Admission is \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, and \$2 for children two years and older. The museum is handicapped accessible.

For more information, call the Wenham Museum at 978-468-2377.▲

Bookmark it! Sustainable Ag. Expertise On-line

Sustainable Agriculture Network (SAN) has created an on-line Directory of Expertise to connect people seeking information about sustainable agriculture with those practicing it at www.sare.org/expertise.

Make your own expertise available by filling out the data entry form on the web. Find the SAN calendar of Events at <http://www.sare.org/htdocs/events/>.



SAN is the communications and outreach arm of the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. SARE is a U.S. Department of Agriculture-funded initiative that sponsors competitive grants for sustainable agriculture research and education in a regional process nationwide. SAN is dedicated to the exchange of scientific and practical information on sustainable agricultural systems using a variety of printed and electronic communications tools.▲

CLASSIFIED

Kubota with plow, rake, cultivator and cutter. 400 hours -- good working condition. \$3000. 508-487-1394.

For sale: NH 451 7' 3pt. Sickle bar mower \$950. Late cut hay in field or delivered \$2.25 per bale and up. 603-924-4263.

Wanted: David Bradley walking tractor parts and access. Mostly interested in implements and attachments. Sold by Sears 1940s thru 60s. Call Bob 508-653-8939.

Wanted: Irrigation pump with 7-15HP gas engine. Self priming with 2-3" output line capable of 40 GPM operation. Needed for drip system. 978-392-6730, dkcoveyou@aol.com

We will help Massachusetts farmers with a free help-wanted ad in THE CARETAKER GAZETTE. We have Massachusetts subscribers who want to work on your farm. Contact: THE CARETAKER GAZETTE, PO Box 5887, Carefree, AZ 85377. 480-488-1970. www.caretaker.org.

Creative Labels of Vermont specializes in custom labeling for the specialty food and beverage industry. Call Jim Pinsonneault, 800-639-7092 x47.

Empire Packaging Company -- retail and wholesale packaging to meet the needs of today's agriculture. 800-562-5520.

Highly successful fish-based fertilizer now available. Approved for organic farming by ORML. Particularly suitable for vegetables and small fruits. Bio-Stimulates, Inc. Jay Tripp, 1-508-789-4145, Jay111745@aol.com.

Grow your farm or small business into a good-sized, profitable operation. We can help you write a business plan which will guide your sustainable growth over the next 3 years. Woody Pratt, Sherwood Consultants, 617-232-8818, sherconsl@aol.com

Subscribe to the New England Farm Bulletin. \$17/year includes 2 free farm classifieds or \$17 in free information booklets, monthly publication, annual almanac, New England fairs and farmers' market directory, monthly farm classifieds and features, access to rare farm topics and more! NEFB, Dept. MA, PO Box 67, Taunton, MA 02780.

How to Place a Classified Ad

Classified ads are accepted free-of charge on a first-come basis. Limit: 25 words. Be sure to include a phone number. No display ads will be accepted. Only one ad per business/individual per issue, unless space permits. Ads may run in consecutive issues, space permitting.

Ads must be of interest to Massachusetts farmers. The Mass. Dept. of Food and Agriculture reserves the right to refuse any listing it deems inappropriate for publication.

Send typewritten or neatly printed copy to:

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e-mail: Diane.Baedecker@state.ma.us

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Diane Baedeker Petit, Editor, Farm & Market Report

This publication is available in alternate formats upon request.

calendar 2001

July 26 - Massachusetts Flower Growers Summer Field Day 2001, 1:30-7:15 PM at Elm Bank Reservation, Dover, MA. Contact Tina Smith, 413-545-5306, Paul Lopes, 508-295-2212 ext.24 UMass Extension Floriculture Program, or Bob Luczai 978-952-0116, Mass. Flower Growers Assoc., for more information.

July 28 -- Heirloom Garlic Tasting at the Great Barrington Farmers' Market, 9:00 am-1:00 pm.. Sample different varieties of garlic infused oil. Featuring: Wheatleigh Chef. Sponsored by the Eastern Native Seed Conservancy, Lawrence Davis-Hollander: 413-229-8316

August 5 -- Taste of Williamstown, Spring Street, 11:00 am-3:00 pm. Farmers' market, fabulous food cooked with local products and more. Christine Herr: 413-458-9077.

August 10-12 -- NOFA Annual Summer Organic Conference at Hampshire College, Amherst. Contact Julie Rawson, 978-355-2853 or jackkitt@aol.com for details.

August 11-12 -- Celebrate Seaport! next to Fan Pier in Boston. Produce and flower growers, specialty foods producers needed. Open to the public. For info, Janet Christensen 617-626-1735, or janet.christensen@state.ma.us

August 23 -- Seed Saving Workshop by Eastern Native Seed Conservancy at the Berkshire Botanical Gardens. History of heirloom crops, pollination/cleaning techniques. \$35 (\$25 farmers discount). Thursday, 10:00 am-3:00 pm. Lawrence Davis-Hollander: (413)-229-8316

August 23-26 -- Cummington Fair at the Cummington Fairgrounds, 1 mile off Rte 9, 20 miles west of Northampton. 133rd year. Featuring: Mass. State Jersey Show, Mass. State Guernsey Show, W. Mass. Lumberjack Championships, ox pulls, parade, contests and horse pulls. For details call 413-634-5091 or visit www.cummingtonfair.com.

August 24-25 -- Massachusetts Marketplace Festival at Elm Bank Reservation, Dover, Mass. Sponsored by MDFA and the Mass. Horticultural Society. Contact Mary Jordan, MDFA, 617-626-1750, Mary.Jordan@state.ma.us.

Flower Growers Field Day

The University of Massachusetts Extension and the Massachusetts' Flower Growers Association will hold the Massachusetts Flower Growers Summer Field Day 2001 on Thursday, July 26, 2001, 1:30 pm to 7:15 pm at Elm Bank Reservation, Dover, MA. The program is as follows:

1:30 – 5:00, Trade Show Under the Tents, Visit growers and suppliers!

1:30 - 2:30, The Flower Fields: Production Tips and What's New and for Spring 2002, Joe O'Donovan, Ecker Ranch

2:30 – 3:15, Trade Show Break

3:15 – 4:15, Concurrent Sessions

Problems and Solutions for Poinsettia Growers, Joe O'Donovan, Ecker Ranch

Marketing/Grower Panel: The best and worst ideas we used this past year.

4:15 – 5:00, Bedding Plant Trial Gardens

John Peterson & Nancy Christensen, Massachusetts Horticultural Society
Douglas Cox, University of Massachusetts, Bob Luczai, Ball Seed Co.

5:00 – 6:30, Fantastic Lobster/Clambake and Chicken Dinner

(1-1/4 lb. lobster, clams, 1 quarter chicken, corn on the cob, salad and chowder)

Note: 8 oz. sirloin steak can be substituted for the lobster. See registration form.

6:30 – 7:15, Speaker/Entertainment

Register by July 21st. Registration is \$15 per person, dinner is \$35 per person. Send checks made payable to: Mass Flower Growers' Association, 59 Foster St. Littleton, MA 01460 along with name, address and phone number of those who will attend.

Wholesale growers and Associated Trade Businesses are invited to participate as exhibitors in the trade fair (\$80 includes booth and one free exhibitor registration). Contact Bob Luczai at 978-952-0116.▲

7/01

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